

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

A telecommunications system has a source base station ( $BS_S$ ) and a destination base station ( $BS_D$ ), and a handover unit (100) having a dynamic offset threshold determination unit (102) which establishes a dynamic offset threshold for starting soft handover. When the dynamic offset threshold for soft handover is exceeded, a preliminary portion of a handover sequence is initiated at the destination base station. The preliminary portion of the handover sequence is initiated so that a time-critical handover sequence activity (such as  $L1$  uplink synchronization) is well underway, if not completed, by the time the soft handover is actually needed. The dynamic offset threshold for starting handover is based on a probability that the mobile station will engage in the handover. The probability is a statistical probability that handover will actually occur based on handover history of other mobile stations previously and similarly traveling and of the same signal strength. Another portion of the soft handover sequence (e.g., a remaining portion of the soft handover sequence) is initiated when the signal strength from the destination base station as received at the specified mobile station has a predetermined relationship to a fixed offset threshold.